

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: January 16, 2018
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Paul Benoit, City Administrator
SUBJECT: Consideration of a Policy for Designation of Heritage Trees on City Property

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the attached policy regarding the Designation of Heritage Trees on City Property.

BACKGROUND

In early 2017, under the guidance of Park Commissioner Jim Horner, the Park Commission began to explore ways the City could recognize noteworthy trees in our public parks and open spaces. Mr. Horner, former University of California campus landscape architect and author of Trees of the Berkeley Campus, used his diverse experience to develop a policy that outlines procedures for designating Heritage Trees in our urban forest on City owned land.

Working with staff in February of 2017, Mr. Horner led a subcommittee of Park Commissioners, consisting of Chair Jamie Totsubo and Commissioner Patty Dunlap to refine policy elements, goals, and language. In mid -August, the preliminary outline was presented to city arborists Nick Millosovich and Dave Frankel, and discussed with City Administrator Paul Benoit.

The proposed policy content was discussed at the September 6, 2017 Park Commission meeting. The Park Commission was presented with a Frequently Asked Questions Document about the points which would be contained in any policy at its November 1, 2017 meeting. This FAQ provided the basis for the final draft policy prepared by City Clerk John Tulloch. The proposed policy is Attachment A. The FAQ is Attachment B. Subsequently, at their January 3, 2018 meeting, the Park Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council approve the Heritage Tree Policy.

The intent of the Park Commission, as expressed in the draft policy, is that only trees on City owned property be eligible for designation as Heritage Trees. Further, quoting from the policy, “Designation as a Heritage Tree is intended to celebrate noteworthy and distinctive trees in the community. However, designation as a Heritage Tree does not provide any special protection to trees so designated.” It is also important to note that eligibility for designation does not extend to trees on private property or property owned by other public agencies.

Highlights of the proposed Heritage Tree Policy:

The overall intent of the Heritage Tree Policy is to:

- Recognize and identify special and distinctive trees that are noteworthy by their size, unique species, prominent location or historical context in our parks or open spaces.
- Encourage residents to visit City parks and open spaces to find trees eligible for heritage tree designation.
- Promote the study of nature through the use, enjoyment, and greater awareness of our public parks, streets, and medians.

The benefits of having a Heritage Tree Policy:

- Provides another expression of what residents of Piedmont value.
- Helps to promote greater awareness of the benefits of a beautiful, healthy and diverse urban forest.
- Underscores the important environmental benefits that the greater urban forest make to our community such as clean air, carbon sequestration, their ecological role, wildlife benefits and improved storm water control.
- Provides the potential to create an interactive map on the City's website to show heritage tree locations, common and botanical names, size, origin of species, qualities, and date of designation.

Trees nominated for designation as Heritage Trees must be in good health and should have one or more of the following qualities:

- Aesthetics
- Historical Value
- Educational Value

Any resident or staff can nominate a tree for designation. Final selection of trees for designation would be made by the Park Commission, after receiving a report from staff. Recognition of the Heritage Trees would be announced at the City's yearly Arbor Day Celebration.

This program has tremendous potential for public/private partnerships. Community organizations such as the Piedmont Beautification Foundation, local garden clubs, and Piedmont High School AP Environmental Science students may be interested in underwriting or volunteering to implement the policy and contributing funds to help defray the cost of the tree tags.

By: Chester Nakahara, Director of Public Works
Nancy B. Kent, Parks & Projects Manager

CITY OF PIEDMONT
Policy & Procedure

Policy No. X
Section: Parks

SUBJECT: Designation of Heritage Trees on City Property

Policy

It is the policy of the City of Piedmont to recognize and celebrate noteworthy and distinctive trees on City owned property. This Heritage Tree Policy underscores the important benefits that trees, and the greater urban forest, make to our community such as clean air, carbon sequestration, their ecological role, wildlife benefits, and improved storm water control.

Procedure

1. Each year, the Park Commission may solicit nominations for trees on City owned property to be designated as Heritage Trees. The Commission and Department of Public Works staff will solicit nominations from individuals and community groups including, but not limited to, the Piedmont Beautification Foundation, Garden Clubs, Scouting Organizations, and Piedmont High School AP Environmental Science students.
2. Nominations for designation may be for an individual tree or a group of trees of the same species in a small, defined area on City owned property where an individual tree alone may not merit such status, but the collective import of a group or association is greater than the individual tree. Nominations for a group of trees shall be considered a single nomination.
3. Trees nominated for designation as Heritage Trees shall be on City property, should be in good health, not pose a hazard to pedestrians, automobiles, buildings, or utilities and shall have one or more of the following qualities:
 - a) **Aesthetics:** The tree is an integral part of an architectural theme, or plays an important role in framing or screening a building or other civic feature.
 - b) **Historical:** The tree is recognized as part of a memorial or is an outstanding remnant of early civic plantings. The tree may already have landmark status, named with a plaque, or identified as a contributing or character-defining feature in a historic structures or landscape report.

- c) **Educational:** The tree represents an outstanding example of the species, in its age, size and form, is unique to the City, or is an outstanding example of California flora.
4. Upon receiving the nominations, Department of Public Works staff shall evaluate nominated tree(s) to determine whether the nominated tree(s) meet the criteria for the designation as a Heritage Tree. Staff will present their report on the nominated trees to the Park Commission.
 5. The Park Commission will consider staff's report on the nominated trees and may designate a maximum of five trees as Heritage Trees per year. The designations will be formally announced at the City's annual Arbor Day celebration.
 6. The Department of Public Works will develop signage to be placed on or near each designated Heritage Tree. In addition, staff shall create a map of designated Heritage Trees which will be made available to the public at City Hall and on the City's web site.
 7. The Park Commission and Department of Public Works will work with interested community groups to obtain possible funding for the operation and maintenance of the Heritage Tree program.
 8. Designation as a Heritage Tree is intended to celebrate noteworthy and distinctive trees in the community. However, designation as a Heritage Tree does not provide any special protection to trees so designated.
 9. Should a designated Heritage Tree become diseased, malformed, or otherwise no longer meet the designating criteria, it may be removed from the program by vote of the Park Commission. Should a designated Heritage Tree pose an imminent hazard to persons or property, the Director of Public Works may immediately take action to remove the designated tree, upon written determination of the hazard.

Initiated by: Park Commission

Approved by:

Date:

November 1, 2017 - Piedmont Park Commission – Proposed Heritage Tree Policy

What is a Heritage Tree Policy?

It is a city program or procedure that celebrates noteworthy and distinctive trees in the community and promotes understanding of their benefits to our urban forest.

Why is it good for Piedmont?

It will be another expression of what the community values. It celebrates the best of our public urban forest. It will identify special, distinctive trees, noteworthy by their large size, unique species, prominent location or historical context.

Why is that important?

The Heritage Tree Policy will promote the study of nature through the use and enjoyment of our public parks, streets and medians. It will underscore the important benefits that trees, and the greater urban forest, make to our community such as clean air, carbon sequestration, their ecological role, wildlife benefits and improved storm water control. The intent is that people of all ages will be encouraged to visit our parks and find each Heritage Tree.

What criteria are used to determine whether a tree qualifies for the program?

To be considered a heritage tree, it should be in good health, not pose a hazard to pedestrians, automobiles, buildings or utilities. The designation may include a group of trees of the same species where an individual tree alone may not merit such status, but the collective import of a group or association is greater than the individual tree.

The tree, or group of trees, should have one or more of the following qualities:

1. **Aesthetics:** The tree is an integral part of an architectural theme, or plays an important role in framing or screening a building or other civic feature.
2. **Historical:** The tree is recognized as part of a memorial or is an outstanding remnant of early civic plantings. The tree may already have landmark status, named with a plaque, or identified as a contributing or character-defining feature in a historic structures or landscape report.
3. **Educational:** The tree represents an outstanding example of the species, in its age, size and form, is unique to the City, or is an outstanding example of California flora.

Should a Heritage Tree become diseased, malformed or otherwise no longer meet the designating criteria, it may be removed from the program by vote of the Park Commission.

How will trees be designated?

Any resident or staff member may nominate a tree. New trees will be nominated each calendar year by December 31, and then vetted through the Public Works department arborists. They will test whether the nominees meet the criteria for the Heritage Tree designation. City staff will bring candidate trees to the Park Commission, who then will discuss and vote on which trees to include. Up to five new trees will be announced and added to the program the following Arbor Day.

Who maintains the policy?

The program will be managed by the Public Works department staff and the Park Commission. Ultimately symbols on an interactive map on or linked to the City's web page could show the tree locations. Clicking on the symbols would bring up information about the trees such as: location, common and botanical names, size, origin of the species, qualities that make it distinctive and when it was added to the program. In the near term photos and a map of the trees may be added to the PBF display now running in City Hall.

What are the costs?

The probable costs outlined here are limited to City expenses in terms of time. Community partners may adopt some aspects of the policy that could offset some City costs.

- 1) staff time to evaluate and present the nominations.
- 2) staff time to layout, fabricate, install (and repair) the tree plaques.
- 3) extra consideration may be devoted to these trees. Proposed projects will recognize and protect Heritage trees by using best practices in design and construction. Project reviews by the Public Works or the Park and Planning Commissions should support the protection of the Heritage Trees.

Who are Community Partners?

The Park Commission and Public Works Department welcome organizations in the community to assist the implementation of the policy. Possible participants include:

- Piedmont Beautification Foundation
- Piedmont Garden Clubs
- Local Scouting Organizations
- Piedmont High School AP Environmental Science students

Possible activities may include: underwriting the cost of the plaques and their upkeep, leading walking tours of the trees, encouraging nominations, developing and maintaining an interactive map for community use, and arranging Arbor Day publicity and announcements.

Why only public trees?

There are many superlative trees throughout Piedmont. To include trees on private property would greatly increase the pool of candidates. Many communities have heritage tree ordinances that identify and celebrate special trees, but also protect

selected species, such as oaks and redwoods, or in some cases, all trees over certain size without regard to land ownership. These ordinances can be punitive requiring property owners to obtain permits and pay fees when having tree work done, requiring more City staffing to process applications, regulate care and enforce penalties. This truncates the sense of the tree as a community asset. The intent is to have a policy and procedure that celebrates community trees, not an ordinance that regulates the use and enjoyment of private property.

Suggested sign examples

Durable, weatherproof sign material can range from multi-colored layers of plastic laminate, baked enamel, or engraved metal and would typically be about 3 1/2" x 5". Signs should be attached to the trees at eye level (60") with non-corrosive screws. For example the message might read:

City of Piedmont

Heritage Tree #6

Italian Stone Pine

Pinus pinea

Southern Europe